DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 349 UD 031 842

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TITLE Diverse School Populations and the Corresponding Need for Multiple-Identity Coalitions.
PUB DATE Mar 97
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 24-28, 1997).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperation; *Cultural Differences; Democracy; *Diversity (Student); Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Empowerment; *Equal Education; Ethnicity; Government Role; *Multicultural Education; Racial Discrimination; *Racial Identification; Sex Bias; Social Class
IDENTIFIERS *Coalitions; Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

To make public education more democratic and to move toward greater social justice and inclusivity, it is necessary to respect diversity, and to examine difference and identity in the contexts of materiality and social class. Social theory must be built to integrate racism and sexism with class relations and illuminate how oppressive structures are reproduced and can be changed. Rapidly changing demographics in schools and society suggest the need for changes in educational systems, and these changes should include improvements for those who have been oppressed. Safe multicultural frameworks have been proposed that marginalize or obscure the important issues of economic wealth and power underlying our society, but real educational reform must be driven by umbrella coalitions of adults who demand that the State as central government act on behalf of the democratic rather than the capitalist imperative. The new multiculturalism recognizes that education for democratic empowerment must get beyond a culturalist focus in order to challenge the real asymmetrical relations of power, privilege, access, and wealth. Educators must understand individual and complex identities in the contexts in which they operate. Multicultural education must be reconstructionist and must involve those who have been most affected by injustice and oppression. Consideration of the work of Nancy Fraser suggests that in the postsocialist era, social class is being replaced by group identity, such as nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality. Real strategies for redistribution must consider all of these aspects of identity. Real empowerment must rest on multiple identity coalitions for education reform as well as other social reforms. (SLD)

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Diverse School Populations and the Corresponding Need for Multiple-Identity Coalitions

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AERA

March 1997

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I

Public schools are characterized by important historical struggles conducted by those who seek to make education more answerable to the requirements of: (1) bona fide democratic practice, (2) movement toward more social justice and greater inclusivity, as well as (3) respect for diversity—although not solely "free" market consumer choice differences.[1] These struggles are against the imperatives of capitalism, hierarchies based on race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, as well as various social injustices based on constructed and invidious differences. The reach and power of the market make William Watkins' following insight relevant to our discussion: "Diversity has apparently become [for some] and end in itself. Yet ... [one] cannot help but raise questions about what 'diversity' might mean in capitalist America. What does it mean in a society rigidly stratified by economic division? Does ethnic diversity challenge the economic arrangements of society? What does the [narrow] culturalist dialogue have to say about ... [social] class?"[2] All too often, diversity and pluralism "lite" lead to conceptualization and practice based on the faulty assumption that prejudice and mistreatment of the subaltern "other" is based solely upon irrationality, personality, and/or other psychological disorders, rather than on outrageously great asymmetries of power, income, wealth, access, etc.—that are politically constructed, instead of attributable to the "nature of things." I seek to ground the analysis of difference and identity in the work before you within materiality and class; although, not in a reductionist or mechanistic base-determines-superstructure manner.

Raymond Morrow and Carlos Torres write that many leftist theorists are convinced that "'any attempt at understanding our social formation ... [which] does not combine in an unreductive way analyses of class and gender together is only half a theory at best ... The same ... needs to be said of race as well.' "[3] Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant have argued, "social theory that criticizes unequal relationships among groups, and that illuminates how oppressive structures are reproduced and can be changed is needed ... There is a need to build a theory that integrates racism and sexism with class relations, and that does not treat two of these as subsidiary to the third. We believe that such theory-building should be done by a group representing diverse race and class backgrounds and both sexes. Individuals in the group will need to prepare themselves

by familiarizing themselves with the historic and contemporary experiences of their own race/class/gender groups, and of one of two other groups ... During their preparation, individuals should seek answers to the following questions: Under what conditions has one group oppressed another group? Exactly what were the group boundaries? What strategies or power bases did a group use to subordinate another group, how was that relationship maintained, and how did the subordinate group respond?"[4] Although we must pluralize—beyond social class—the bases of domination and possible resistance, we must be careful to avoid going down the road of alleging that there is an infinite and uncategorizable pluralism of identities and sites. Furthermore, the necessary analyses of specificities must not keep us from relating our findings to concomitant work featuring macrostructures—including the global capitalist political economy. In spite of the theoretical difficulties inherent to relating micro to macro realities, the intellectual work must go forward. However, we must keep in mind that, "while we may not be able to conceptualize entirely the multiple parallel determinations, or the interplay of class, race, and gender in education, we can at least try to support the struggle to overcome discrimination, oppression, and the deep structuring of subjectivities with classist, racist, and gender-biased overtones."[5]

Cameron McCarthy explains how rapidly changing demographics in school and society suggest the need for commensurate change in our schools; furthermore, these changes must include improvements for those who have been oppressed.

> As school populations become more ethnically diverse, and as minorities have become *majorities* in many school districts ... the moral and practical support for the hegemony of Eurocentrism in the curriculum has been imperiled ... Minority youth and women have [also] begun to offer a more systematic challenge to the structure of school knowledge [itself] ... Minority students are mounting "new" demands for democratization and diversity in the curriculum and course offerings ... This ... rupture with the dominant paradigm has made possible even more radical demands for critical *anti*racist and *anti*sexist ... materials and practices ... [Moreover, it has been argued that curriculum and pedagogy] for minority and majority youth should have an organic link to other experiences and struggles ... in society, with respect to such issues as the loss of infrastructural support and jobs ... Such a new critical approach to the multicultural curriculum would also "celebrate the contributions of working people, women, and minorities to our general cultural pool" and would be the point of departure "for providing [subaltern] students with their own cultural capital." By insisting that radically diverse cultural knowledge(s) rooted in the ... experiences of oppressed groups should be introduced into the school curriculum, we can avoid the "benign" pluralism and cultural relativism that is now embodied in certain innocuous forms of multicultural education... "Such pluralism tolerates the existence of salsa, it even enjoys Mexican restaurants, but it bans Spanish as a medium of instruction."[6]

McCarthy draws upon Robert W. Connell's work, namely, the latter's idea of "common learnings,"[7] which favors the generalized use of critical knowledge for all students—not just for the sons and daughters of the middle class, rich, and the powerful. I have referred to such knowledge as: "getting at the physics of things," coming to understand the underpinnings upon which a society rests, and/or power knowledge. Obviously such a diffusion of critical/power knowledge would include taking into account and valuing the knowledge and experiences (hopefully, *reflected upon* experiences) of *all* students in our schools. In the end such knowledge could prove to be counterhegemonic as well as enabling subaltern students to realize their situation, its causes, and perhaps some solutions. Both Paulo Freire and a less pessimistic Marx would surely support this project. Instead of lip-service to salsa and old dead subaltern heroes, a critical education would privilege common learnings resting upon warrantedly assertible arguments for positive democracy, social justice, and respect for bona fide diversity—rather than the United Colors of Benetton. Such a critical approach must reflect the need for a broad epistemological input because in a secular democracy it is impossible to prove that any one person or group has a pipeline to certainty. The inclusion of multivocal articulations of lived experiences—as well as critical/learned reflections upon them—would make possible a series of challenges to previously unchallenged and privileged school and societal assumptions and practices. Such school reform could link students to progressive projects conducted by their parents and/or other adults.

What is being favored herein stands in stark contrast to "a multicultural education which aims primarily at tolerance and acceptance of other cultures as a societal goal. In the process, this 'safe' multicultural framework either marginalizes or obfuscates the important issues of economic wealth and power underlying our society. This version of multiculturalism becomes 'safe' to those wielding economic and political power because social reforms can be introduced without altering fundamental relations of wealth and property ownership.[8] The educational reform I favor must be driven by umbrella coalitions of adults who demand that the State (central government) acts on behalf of the democratic rather than capitalist imperative, both of which influence school and State.[9] In keeping with the idea of "safe" multiculturalism, I am reminded of all too many people who insist on conventionally polite talk, when it serves as a strategy to never allow the underlying

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issues and structural injustices to be discussed honestly and publicly. Specific politenesses are reified into allegedly universal norms of behavior that serve to support particular hegemonies.

The kind of education championed herein recognizes that all too often democracy is celebrated as if it were separate from political economy. In this era of capitalist triumphalism and a totalizing new world order under its capital's aegis, certain celebrants of "democracy" proffer an electoral brand that is unfortunately "compatible with ... rigidly stratified and oppressive class systems. Such is the democracy of Mexico, the Philippines, or Mississippi, where one can vote even if one cannot eat. Linking diversity and multiculturalism to improved communication, association, and democracy sounds empowering [to some] but contributes to a narrow discourse where questions about property ownership, wealth, and the State never come up. In this context educating for democracy becomes a trite, meaningless construct."[10] Education for democratic empowerment, social justice, and respect for bona fide diversity must get beyond a culturalist focus that leads to suggestions for behavioral changes and "solutions"—ones that do not challenge the realities of asymmetrical relationships of power, privilege, access, and wealth—ones that are classed, raced, and gendered. We must remember that racial and gender discrimination/oppression occur upon particular terrains and at specific historical times; moreover, presently, they occur within the contexts of capitalist work relations as well as capital's colonization of everyday life, and for a rapidly increasing number of the world's people.

With the listener/reader's permission, allow me to articulate in yet another way how I believe that it is of crucial importance to understand our individual and complex identities, along with experiences had within the multiple sites where identities are played out; relatedly, we must not return to a simpler privileging of classness as the one and only condition within which one suffers injustice. Furthermore, we must realize that struggle against oppression can be, and is, mounted from various sites and identities beyond paid labor and social class. There are multiple determinants for one's or group oppression, privilege, and possibilities for personal and social action—whether the aim is to reform or reconstruct schools, the economy, or the government. As Connell has argued, there is no ultimate " 'generative nucleus' ... from which the rest of the pattern of general relations springs ... There is, however, a unity in the field, and orderliness, which

needs to be understood... This unity is not the unity of a system, as functionalist analysis would imply ... [Instead] it is a unity—always under construction—of historical composition. I mean 'composition' as in music: a tangible, active, and often difficult process of bringing elements into connection with each other and thrashing out their relationships ... The product of the process is not a logical unity but an empirical unification. It happens on particular terms and in particular circumstances."[11] Critical progressive educators must help their students (and colleagues) understand this empirical unification that is characterized by class, race, gender as well as other sites and identities which allow and/or disallow certain advantages.

Kris Gutierrez has argued that multiculturalism

> is not about making the school curricula more inclusive ... *critical* [my emphasis] multiculturalism requires a social transformation of the social relationships in the contexts and ... purposes for learning. Hegemony needs to be understood not only as the product of the larger social systems ... but also as the product of the way individual classrooms and their social relations are organized and constructed. As we struggle for social heteroglossia, we must insist on the commingling of various sociocultural perspectives and curricula that have both a political and sociocultural conscience. To do so requires access to and participation in multiple public spheres in which people with diverse values, beliefs, and practices jointly construct new sets of relationships, interactional forms, and ... understandings of race, culture, and diversity [hopefully, class also] ... Ultimately, critical multiculturalism must challenge and reconstruct the hegemonic theories of multiculturalism so that issues of representation, the unequal distribution of power, economic and material resources, and access to educational institutions and ... [elsewhere] are taken up.[12]

The current demographic and socioeconomic conditions in the U.S. make clear that a reconstructionist/liberatory school-society project must be comprised of those students and adults who are most affected by injustice and oppression of various kinds. A multiculturalism that is not reconstructionist is mostly an exercise in crowd control, careerism for educators, travel opportunities, attending around-the-world-food affairs while remaining at home, and allowing the demands of global capitalists to coopt many multicultural courses and programs. Watkins has asserted that "committed progressive multiculturalists hope for curriculum and educational reform that is genuinely 'reconstructionist,' that is, capable of [helping to alter] ... fundamental societal arrangements. Conversely, those who strive to have reform protect the existing arrangements hope to maintain multicultural [and other areas of] education within safe ... boundaries."[13]

Holly Sklar has presented us with a grim picture of U.S. society at the end of this millennium, one that provides evidence for the need of broad-based progressive coalitions in order to change the schools and socioeconomic political systems of this country. Sklar's snapshot invokes passages from Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (1991). Sklar reminds us that Martin L. King urged United Statesians to choose community over chaos. " 'A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth ... There is nothing to prevent us from paying adequate wages to schoolteachers ... There is nothing but a lack of social vision to prevent us from paying an adequate wage to every American citizen whether [s/]he be a hospital worker, laundry worker, maid or day laborer. There is nothing but shortsightedness to prevent us from guaranteeing an annual minimum—and livable—income for every American family.' "[14] Sklar informs the reader that conditions King warned about have become a good deal worse since his murder in 1968. Wealth is rushing upward instead of trickling down. The War on Poverty has become a war *on* the poor. "Economic inequality is now so extreme that the richest 1 percent of American families have nearly as much wealth as the entire bottom 95 percent. More than a fifth of all children are living in poverty in this, the world's richest nation. That's according to the government which undercounts both poverty and unemployment. Downward mobility has become the legacy for younger generations. Neither two incomes, nor college degrees assure that [all too many] younger families will ever match their parents' living standards ... Full-time jobs are becoming scarcer as corporations shape a cheaper, more disposable workforce of temporary workers, part-timers and other 'contingent workers.' "[15] Far from pursuing the promise of equal opportunity, those who are most powerful in this country (as well as their agents and minions) seek to label children as illegitimate, *expect them to fail, attempt to fail them, fail many of them,* and actually treat the children and adults of poverty's culture as enemies.

II

The need for multiple identity coalitions, i.e., a politics of identity beyond but including social class is attributable in large part to the historical failure to achieve socioeconomic justice for

all citizens, as well as others who live in this polity, and workers—including those who are engaged in unpaid labor. I maintain that we should not abandon the idea of citizen-worker as an axis around which to organize necessarily broad democratic coalitions; however, we must take seriously the fact that as we relate to the polity and while we labor in order to shape recalcitrant matter we do so as not just classed persons, but raced and gendered also.

My having stressed the importance of the citizen-worker as the centrally most important category for a broad collective politics of transformation is not a Trojan Horse for privileging white male, paid workers. However, the difficulties inherent to identity politics and demands for recognition are numerous: chief among them is the impossibility of giving special attention to each and every identity that comprises the human condition; relatedly, even if it were possible, how would claims for justice be evaluated among the myriad voices? Manifestly, an ever-expanding identity politics poses serious problems for those who wish to construct broad-based, radical democratic coalitions. I argue that the best protection and opportunity for amplified/rich lives for each and every person comprising our wonderfully diverse genus and species is a reconstructed and more just society in which everyone is treated as a valuable citizen and worker.

It is within this realizable society where advocates of identity politics can best promote and realize their historic, reasonable demands for justice. Although there are certain frustrations and injustices inherent to the human condition that politics cannot remedy, we are far from achieving a society where every human being is treated as a valuable "thou"; in fact, all too many human beings are treated as if they were "manipulable it(s)"—as Martin Buber has explained. To claim that the human condition is not likely to be one of complete fulfillment, happiness, and justice is not a clandestine argument for the Rightist contention that biology is fate, and/or that democratic politics cannot get beyond the guillotine and gulag.

I contend that in spite of the need to recognize identity politics, its claims and reasons—as well as its constituents' interactive relationships with social class and citizen-like relations vis-à-vis the political economy—István Mészáros is correct to insist that "there cannot be social transformation without an agency and ... the only agency conceivable under the present condition is labor in the sense Marx was talking about and which we must rediscover for ourselves under

present conditions."[16] Marx is relevant as long as capitalism remains the most powerful secular force on earth. It is capitalism and its dynamic, crises-ridden characteristics that most importantly provides the terrains upon and contexts within which the politics of identity are conducted. As we know, Marx did not choose the working class as the key agency for historical transformation because they suffered the most, but because of his assessment of their position on the map of socioeconomic and political realities. Si Kahn, who has been a community organizer in the American South, takes identity realities seriously, e.g., race, gender, and social class as organizing principles; furthermore, he concedes that critics might call his strategy "separatist"; however, he explains that the strategy is correct as a starting principle, viz., beginning where various people are at. In Kahn's view the various persons demanding justice from identity bases must enter coalitions and work across racial, gender, and class lines. He explains that working-class organization is crucial to building a healthy society, especially during this period of capitalist offensive; however, he insists that "we are not strong enough to exclude significant numbers of people who potentially can be part of a progressive movement."[17]

The idea of citizen-worker is not intended to exclude the importance of color, gender or sexual orientation identities; in fact, this idea is drawn from Marx's idea of species-being. This view of human being speaks to the possibility that we can raise ourselves above and beyond the conditions that serve to distort what persons can and should become. Said differently, we are compelled to liberate ourselves from oppressive conditions because of our intrinsic need to achieve self-realization.[18] It should be enough to organize around a sign stating "I am a human being"; however, this is unfortunately not the case. Racist, sexist, elitist, homophobic, and misogynist language and practices persist, resulting in destructive divisions among us as well as casting some of us out into the wilderness of "serviceable otherness." During this period dominated by yet another capitalist "gale of creative destruction," it is especially difficult to recognize our common condition, classness, and citizen-worker identities. The predominance of the "black" market and Darwinian jungle has long prevented effective collective action by subaltern people—at least in the short run. The leaders who emerge from among citizen-workers can and must be representative of the whole wonderful diversity of the human family—a family whose interests are best served by

overcoming a hegemonic system backed by absurd amounts of direct coercive power. The radical democratic anticapitalist struggle must be aimed at the cessation of history being made behind our backs.

It is plausible to argue that capitalism could survive even if racism and sexism were eliminated. In theoretical terms, the exploitation of the working class need not be along racial, ethnic, gender or sexual orientation lines.

> However, if the most powerful system of hierarchy and bossism during our historical period were dismantled by those who are committed to participatory democratic power being brought to bear upon the conditions that affect our lives, this umbrella coalition of citizen-workers might be able to construct an emerging good society characterized by fairness to all of the diverse members of the human family. This is not to argue that patriarchy, racial/ethnic injustice and discrimination against gays and lesbians are characteristic only of capitalism. But in this historical period the construction of a genuine inclusive participatory democracy demands the deconstruction of capitalism. It is through enhanced citizen-worker political power that equally important improvements of gender, racial, ethnic, and sexual preference justice can be achieved. Institutions, conditions, and processes that are *pro bono publico* can and must be based upon a recognition and celebration of the marvelous differences among members of the human family who are united as citizens, workers, and democrats.[19]

Daniel Singer claims that what is most dangerous to the regime of capital is "not ... sporadic rebellions or 'postmodern' antics. What it fears is that social discontent, the protest of women, the revolt of ecologists should be joined together for long-term action by the vision of a radically different society. Its propagandists have tried to convince people that there is no alternative and there can be none."[20] Chantal Mouffe has reminded us that the goal of radical democracy is to deepen and broaden its logic in order to better connect diverse persons and their struggles. She believes that "such a task requires the creation of new subject-positions that would allow the common articulation ... of antiracism, antisexism, and anticapitalism according to the principle of democratic equivalence."[21] I continue to wrestle with the idea of equivalence, not in terms of persons' rights to decide for themselves where the sources of their pain and exploitation are coming from, but with regard to the possibilities for effective transformative agency.

Referring to those on the Left who blame identity politics and the "multicultural left" for the failure to mobilize a mass-based response to the rise of the Right since circa 1968, Robin Kelley argues that they—Todd Gitlin, *Twilight of Our Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (1995), Michael Tomasky, *Left for Dead: The Life, Death and Possible Resurrection*

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of Progressive Politics in America (1996) et al.—are wrong to blame women, gays and lesbians, and people of color for allegedly abandoning class struggle.

> Universal categories such as class have [allegedly] fallen before the narrow, particularistic mantras of radical chic: race, gender, sexuality and disability ... In their [Gitlin et al.] view class is not just another identity, it transcends ... [it]. If the "Left" wants to save itself, we must abandon our ever shrinking identity niches for the realm of majoritarian thinking ... [Kelley switches gears and now counters:] In some ways I can sympathize with these people about the limitations of "identity politics." While the growing interest in the politics of identity has extended our analytical scope to overlooked or trivialized cultural spheres and expanded our understanding of intellectual history, in some circles it has also tended to limit discussions of power to cultural politics. And while so-called "identity politics" has always profoundly shaped labor movements and—even more than vague [to some], abstract notions of class unity—has been the glue for class solidarity, by the same token it has also become a noose around the necks of oppressed peoples, as in the case of white racism or certain variants of black nationalism. On the other hand, whatever cul-de-sacs we might have entered, the "Enlightenment train" will not lead us out. These people [the "neo-Enlightenment Left"] assume that the universal humanism they find so endearing ...can be easily separated from the historical context of its making.[22]

Kelley makes a good point: class struggle in its original Marxian sense was understood in a concrete way; although, it is obvious that the nineteenth-century European radicals did not experience nor understand struggles against patriarchy and racism. Radicals who understand the central importance of class struggle and one's relationships to political economy must also understand that people experience various injustices and oppressions within their particular situations and within certain identities. To concretize class today means to understand the imbrication of class, race, gender—and yes—sexual orientation. This need not prove to be divisive—although it is admittedly more difficult to organize heterogeneous groups than those which are more homogeneous. Obviously, class is in part lived through race, ethnicity and gender. As Kelley has argued: "There is no universal class identity, just as their is no universal racial or gender or sexual identity. The idea that race, gender, and sexuality are particular whereas class is universal not only presumes that class struggle is ... [a] race and gender-neutral terrain but takes for granted that movements focused on race, gender, or sexuality necessarily undermine class unity and, by definition, cannot be emancipatory for the whole. Don't get me wrong. I'm not giving priority to 'identity politics' over the struggle to dismantle capitalism ... Rather, I have trouble with ... [a] characterization of race, gender, and sexuality as narrow identity politics while 'class' ... rises above these ... identities."[23] I support Kelley's insistence on concretization;

however, I believe that it is necessary to organize around the citizen-worker because it affords greater potential to construct a massive radical democratic movement—one that must be anticapitalist. As we have seen, Marx looked to the proletariat of his time, not because they suffered most, but because of their structural position in the political economy. This claim must be reconsidered presently within the contexts of our lives and struggles. A broadened concept of worker allows race, gender, etc. to be more easily recognized as central to class politics; e.g., a majority of contemporary workers are women, when one necessarily includes unpaid labor! Again, these citizen-workers are concretely raced, gendered, etc. An emancipatory movement in the name of the whole—in school and society—must take the "new social movements" seriously and construct an effective citizen-worker/class politics. Si Kahn would agree!

III

At this point I will summarize some of Nancy Fraser's arguments concerning differences and similarities with regard to various forms of oppression and liberatory possibilities. Her analysis in "From Redistribution to Recognition: Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age" is helpful to my project for constructing more complexly the citizen-worker I champion as the key to radical democratic agency. She endeavors to unite the bases of identity politics with the universalistic tradition of class-based socialism. In fact, Fraser

> contrasts the logic of an economics of redistribution with that of civic and cultural recognition. She argues that while socialism aimed to abolish the proletarian condition the new movements based on ethnicity, [race,] gender or sexual orientation often wish to maintain and assert a distinctive identity. In Fraser's view there are bound to be tensions between the politics of "difference" and the politics of equality. Yet ... each needs the other. Half-measures in the recognition of cultural identities, and in the redistribution of resources, may only reinforce a system of injustice, and in the long term may backfire on those they were intended to help. In a more radical programme, a deconstructive approach to identity, in which ... all views are altered, should be allied to a thoroughgoing process of redistribution.[24]

Fraser is correct to say that in the late twentieth century the struggle for recognition is becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict; furthermore, these post-socialist conflicts replace social class with group identity such as nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality. Although demands for recognition are coming often to displace a politics for socioeconomic redistribution as

the supposed remedy for injustice, Fraser reminds us that such a shift is occurring on terrains characterized by increasing *material* inequality. She understands well that such inequality ranges from income through access to education and health care, and all the way to caloric intake and exposure to toxicity. Considering the growing inequality of people's lives around the world and the paradigmatic shift to a new political imaginary based on identity, difference, recognition, and cultural domination should we attribute the shift to what was once called false consciousness? Or, does the shift represent a long needed redress of "culture-blindness" within the older socialist imaginary? She seeks to occupy middle ground vis-à-vis these stark choices. Fraser is convinced that we must accomplish an unprecedented intellectual and practical task: "that of developing a *critical* theory of recognition, one which identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality. In formulating this project, I assume that justice today requires both redistribution *and* recognition ... [We must learn] how to conceptualize cultural recognition and social equality in forms that support rather than undermine one another ... It also means theorizing the way in which economic disadvantage and cultural disrespect are ... entwined ... Then too, it requires clarifying the ... dilemmas that arise when we try to combat both these injustices simultaneously."[25]

Fraser deserves praise for insisting on redistribution (downward) as a key factor in making our society more humane and just; obviously, it is this insistence that has motivated the various Rightists to do battle against the Leftists who consider some form of rough material equality as the sine qua non to bona fide democracy. David Held argues supportively that democracy cannot permit certain persons and groups to remain in permanently disadvantaged positions. Commitment to democratic autonomy, access, and participation requires a commitment to reducing unfair advantages that some have had over those less fortunate. I interpret Held as asserting that,

> the scope of action must be limited for some, in certain respects, so that it can be justly enhanced for others. It is not as though present advantages have been gained [in most or any cases] through fair competition upon a level playing field. Held captures the spirit of a version of democracy that can be defended ... one that ... [hopefully] will prevail in the long run. "It can be said that a political system implicated deeply in the creation and reproduction of systematic inequalities of power, wealth, income and opportunities will rarely ... enjoy sustained legitimization by groups other than those whom it directly privileges. Or ... only a political order that places the transformations of those inequalities at its centre will enjoy legitimacy in the long run."[26]

Fraser understands that political economy and culture are imbricated and that justice requires both redistribution and recognition; nevertheless, for explanatory reasons she conceptually separates the two. Because socioeconomic injustice is rooted in the political economy, e.g., the expropriation of the fruits of one's labor, deprivation due to inadequate standard of living, etc., the remedies require restructuring along the lines of altering radically the division(s) of labor, revising and publicly controlling investment policies, redistribution of income, and access to key resources. Cultural injustice is grounded in what Fraser calls social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Examples include: being made invisible, disrespected, etc.; therefore, remedies for cultural injustice require cultural-symbolic changes, i.e., different and better recognition of differences. Fraser is astute to suggest imbrication soon after her conceptual separation: *cultural recognition is, in fact, a form of redistribution; furthermore, redistributive remedies presuppose a conception of recognition, i.e., the equal moral worth of all persons.* Fraser is not afraid to face up to the difficulties inherent in attempting to remedy injustices that are in some important ways different from one another: socioeconomic injustice demands the abolition of economic conditions that support group specificity; however, recognition means to continue and/or enhance differentiation. The proletariat does not seek merely to cut a better deal but, instead, to overthrow capitalism that hopefully results in the abolition of classes, including the proletariat.[27] However, as we know, workers have struggled for better conditions more often than seeking to overthrow capitalism.

Fraser argues that the extremes on the conceptual continuum of redistribution and recognition remedies are class and despised sexuality; however, the gray areas are characterized by hybrid modes that suggest a combination of the injuries of class and gender—constructed as the despised Other. In her words: "Bivalent collectivities in sum may suffer both socioeconomic maldistribution and cultural misrecogniton in forms where neither of these injustices is an indirect effect of the other, but where both are primary and co-original. In that case, neither redistributive remedies alone nor recognition remedies alone will suffice. Bivalent collectivities need both."[28] Fraser thinks that gender and race are paradigmatic bivalent collectivities. Both are socially constructed identities rather than the result of "natural" biological facts. For example, both play

important roles with regard to the divisions and stratification within paid labor, as well as the division between paid and unpaid labor. In these times, the latter division is perhaps more indicative of gender experiences. There are gender- and race-specific modes of exploitation, marginalization and deprivation; therefore, in this sense, gender and race are endowed with certain social-class characteristics. Justice demands the smashing of current job-related divisions and injustices based on race and gender. Obviously, race and gender conceived of in biological terms cannot be abolished in the same way Marx's proletariat can; however, if the hostile/derogatory *constructions* of biological differences are what cause injustice, these *constructions* can and must be abolished as well. This kind of analysis must become part of teaching and learning in our public schools.

For Fraser gender is both a political-economic differentiation and a cultural-valuation one. The major factor of gender injustice is androcentrism. Injustices such as sexual assault and domestic violence are relatively independent of the political economy; therefore, they cannot be remedied by redistribution remedies alone. In fact, the logic of remedy is similar to that of respect for sexuality (thought of as different from gender in Fraser's view), namely, to give positive recognition to a devalued group. *Mutatis mutandis*, this applies to the bivalent difficulties and hoped for remedies experienced by people of color. The economy and the culture must be changed radically in both cases. Fraser asks if feminists and others who are committed to racial justice can fight effectively on both fronts.

She speaks of two broad approaches for remedying injustices that cut across the redistribution—recognition divide: (1) affirmation and (2) transformation. The first is a liberal response, whereas the second is a deconstructive socialist one. She accuses the liberals of seeking to correct inequitable outcomes without dealing with the underlying realities that cause the need to create the kind of welfarism (offered as an honorific term) that Rightists attack so effectively—albeit, cruelly. This is accompanied, in her view, by mainstream multiculturalism that attempts to gain acceptance of the constructed Other within the system as it is. Mainstream multiculturalism and all too many forms of identity politics leave unchanged not only the socioeconomic injustices caused by the political economy but also the binary gender and racial codes. The transformative

socialist strategy seeks to deconstruct the homo-hetero dichotomy as well as stark dichotomies between whites and people of color. In fact, this deconstructive strategy endeavors to destabilize all fixed sexual, social, and other identities that have been constructed by those with power vis-à-vis serviceable Others. Fraser speaks favorably of "queer theory" in terms of its aim to get beyond gay identity and on to creating a society with gray area continuums which include more people within the parameters of acceptability. Acting tolerantly and patronizingly toward the gender and racial Other fails to problematize the tolerant patronizer's position; furthermore, it leads to a politics of resentment and backlash. Those who are treated as persons deemed irrevocably different—and allegedly worse—are never safe from those who wish to undo even a modicum of fair treatment and seek to return to blatant oppression. Those who are labeled as different usually become targets of those who consider themselves within the parameters of "normality." I trust that educators can, and will, determine for themselves how to introduce discourse such as Fraser's into appropriate pedagogical practice.

Fraser criticizes liberal affirmative redistribution strategies for being limited to altering attitudinal discrimination instead of attacking the gendered and racial world of work. The failure to alter radically the deep structures that help cause gender and racial disadvantage make necessary continuous transfer payments to certain select groups, resulting in accusations made disturbingly popular recently by spokespersons for the political Right, as well as Democrats in the U.S. Conversely, the long-range goal of deconstructive feminism is to develop a culture without hierarchical constructs that serve to rank-order certain "Others" to the bottom of the list. In the place of this deconstruction, Fraser would have networks of "multiple intersecting differences that are demassified and shifting. This goal is consistent with transformative socialist-feminist redistribution. Deconstruction opposes ... sedimentation and congealing of gender differences that occurs in an unjustly gendered political economy. Its utopian image of a culture in which every new construction of identity and difference are freely elaborated and then ... deconstructed is only possible ... on the basis of rough social equality."[29] Fraser endorses socialism as a transformative remedy because it champions universal social-welfare programs; effective progressive taxation; macroeconomic policies favoring full employment; a large well-funded public sector; significant

public ownership; widespread participatory democracy and the uncoupling of basic consumption shares from employment alone. She is convinced that transformative strategies reduce socioeconomic inequality without stigmatizing certain people as undeserving beneficiaries of other people's labor and charity. This kind of society provides the context from which reciprocity, solidarity, recognition, and distribution can all develop more fully and equitably.

IV

Some contemporary struggles in the U.S. and elsewhere may serve to forward the project Fraser endorses. Clarence Lusane has urged us to recognize that identity politics is most often a matter of necessity for persons living in the "free fire zones" within the U.S. In fact, "it is the continual ... practice of discrimination and violence that drives and reinforces identity politics. But as this book's editor [John Anner] argues, identity politics is rapidly leading into a political blind alley."[30] Lusane explains that the successful social justice organizing portrayed in *Beyond Identity Politics* is not confined to peripheral politics. The grassroots organizers "recognized in the heat of practice and struggle that common ground can be found among and between communities of color as well as between communities of color and white ... [ones]. It has been the historic task of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans to find binding issues and concern with which to forge multiracial, multi-class, multi-gender, and multi-national coalitions ... [Amilcar Cabral's admonition] 'to return to the source.' ... [Means] the daily reservoir of resistance displayed by people at the [concrete] community level—people who exhibit contradictions of all types, but nevertheless are willing to put it all on the line for the sake of justice."[31] There is hope because the regime of capital and its divisive use of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation differences always force us to resist. History is open. It is made by people, including subaltern ones—albeit/unfortunately neither under conditions of our own making, nor just as we might like!

Although Joel Spring's *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality* does not develop fully the possibilities of coalition building comprised of differences featured herein, it does describe "The Great Civil Rights Movement" (chapter 5) in a way that allows the critical reader to

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understand certain common injuries and injustices. His slim volume deals with injustices inflicted and resistance by: Native American, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans. In Spring's words: "Ethnocentric and bicultural education represent attempts to overcome the resistance of dominated cultures to public schools and to protect those cultures from the destructive forces of the dominant culture. [Spring understands well the key role played by the capitalist political economy in the U.S.] ... The folk history of these dominated groups has kept alive a suspicion of the actions of European Americans [as well as the public schools built to maintain privileges of color, class, etc.] ... These tales of the past can be linked to existing conditions of inequality in education ... Jonathan Kozol calls these current conditions 'savage inequalities.' "[32] Spring endorses ethnocentric approaches to education because he thinks dominated groups deserve an opportunity to learn about themselves and the world through the perspective of their own culture. His endorsement of bicultural education is based on a hope that students will be able to function in another culture, *without* loosing one's connections with the original culture.

Let us return to John Anner's views on the possibilities for the multiple identity coalitions that are necessary to forward our project consisting of bona fide democratic empowerment, social justice, and authentic diversity. Anner admits that the democratic Left lacks national leaders with effective visions and movements. However, he invites us to consider evidence that a good deal of social justice organizing is occurring in communities of color at the grassroots level. Furthermore, "these organizations are winning improvements in the lives and working conditions of low-wage workers; building alliances across racial and national boundaries; changing foreign policy; derailing homophobia and sexism; and thwarting some of the most powerful corporations ... The fights are often on a small scale, but point the way to building a larger movement."[33] Anner explains how since the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, Black Power in the 70s, as well as the women's liberation movement which arose at roughly the same time, identity has been the driving force behind what some call the "new social movements." He admits that identity is a "tricky political category" because it is subject to ever-changing circumstances. However, "as individuals are drawn into the struggle, they [can and sometimes do] start to question the ways in which the universal goals being espoused apply to their own situations, and find new ways of thinking about

themselves."[34] The famous 1968 picture of a striking sanitation worker in Memphis, TN, featured his carrying a sign that asserted: "I am a man." Here was a person who had to deal with the brutalities of race and class oppression within a complex context, and chose to make a universal claim—one that might have read: "I am a human being" today. Unfortunately, the universal idea called man/human was kept at the abstract level by the dominant society; therefore, people of color, the working class et al. were not protected by inclusion into this potentially protective universal. I think the formation of social class, as described by the English historian E.P. Thompson, helps explain how Anner's description of contemporary U.S. conditions can, in fact, be seen (*mutatis mutandis*) as roughly similar to the past formation of the English working class.[35] Anner is correct to point out that "the dismantling of formal political barriers unhitched identity and class; identity movements can pretend that their current particularist campaigns will still raise living standards for all members of the group but the evidence is overwhelmingly to the contrary. Thus, much of the original promise of politics based in communities of interest or identity [e.g., blacks] has been diverted into middle-class campaigns for affirmation, assimilation, and 'a piece of the pie.' In the process, working-class and poor people of color, women, gays and lesbians, and others have been left behind ... While American capitalism has made room for increasing numbers of women and people of color in the ranks of the well-to-do and politically powerful, the problems of poverty, segregation, violence, illness, and institutional racism worsen for those trapped at the bottom of an economy that no longer seems to need them ... [Perhaps] class trumps race after all ...[?][36] Anner and I are convinced that identity politics must be connected integrally with class issues; in fact, because of the stupendous increase of the a/immoral capitalist economy's power, issues of economic justice must be prominently featured—along with how racist and sexist power structures serve to exacerbate class stratification and the denial of basic goods and services (including school services) for all-too-many people who have been cast aside.

Some of the chapter titles in Anner's *Beyond Identity Politics* indicate that book's relevance to the central issues raised in the work before you. I present a few: chapter 1, "Power Concedes Nothing Without Demand: Building Multiracial Organizations with Direct Action," chapter 2, "Bridging Race, Class, and Sexuality for School Reform," and chapter 7, "Linking Community

Safety with Police Accountability." In keeping with Anner's book concerning local progressive struggles, see the Milwaukee based journal called *Rethinking Schools* for accounts of progressive initiatives at the local and state levels. The *Labor Press* which is published by the AFL-CIO in Milwaukee is another source for accounts of progressive struggle. The *Labor Party Press* has grown out of the June 1996 founding of the Labor Party in Cleveland, and promises to be another useful source of news about progressive solidaristic initiatives. I have found the *Labor News* published in Indianapolis a unique publication for learning about progressive labor struggle in Indiana.

In keeping with the spirit and intent of the last paragraph, I return to Robin Kelley's "Identity Politics and Class Struggle" for more examples of action at the grassroots level—ones that are relevant to multiple identity coalitions. Kelley writes of Eric Mann "who led the campaign to keep GM Van Nuys [CA] open in the 1980s ... Joe Alvarez, currently the political director for the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employers (UNITE) ... [which is] one of the biggest unions in the country ... has ... taken the lead in the fight against sweatshops throughout the Western hemisphere, building cross-border alliances."[37] Kelley refers to unionized hospital workers who are inspired by the spirit of the civil rights movement. We are informed that in 1994, 21 percent of African Americans in the workforce were unionized compared to 15 percent of whites. In fact, "when nonunion workers were asked: 'Would you join a union at your place of work?' Fifty-six percent of African Americans answered yes, as did forty-six percent of Latinos. Among white workers, only thirty-five percent responded affirmatively."[38] He writes of organizations that are influenced by Third World, feminist, and Black Liberation movements; furthermore, its members do not view race, gender, and sexuality as problems—instead they are shaping working-class politics in new directions. Kelley refers to the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic Justice, the Labor/Community Strategy Center, and *Labor Notes* where activists understand that antiracism and antisexism are central to class struggle. Kelley is right to resuscitate the old International Workers of the World (IWW) slogan: "An injury to one is an injury to all!" In Kelley's words: "We ... can't afford to abandon the subway with all its multicultural messiness to jump on board ... [an] Enlightenment train of pure, simple, color—and gender-blind

class struggle."[39] As an education worker I enthusiastically offer two cheers to Kelley and some of the others who are featured in the work before you. The third cheer is reserved for when we overcome the antidemocratic regime of capital, its global imperium, totalistic logic/reality, and its use of "difference" to sell commodities, and divide workers and citizens. Perhaps the contemporary needle trades union will give rise to a Madame DeFarge who will know how to knit names based on her knowledge of Jamesonian maps?[40]

Endnotes

[1] Henry Giroux has articulated this point well in "Benetton's 'World Without Borders': Buying Social Change," in *The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility*, ed. Carol Becker (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 204–05. "Representations in the postmodern world reach deeply into daily life, contributing to the increasing fragmentation and decentering of individual and collective subjects. Not only are the old categories of race, gender, sexuality, age and class increasingly rewritten in highly differentiating and often divisive terms, but the space of the social is further destabilized through niche marketing which constructs identities around lifestyles, ethnicity, fashion, and a host of other commodified subject positions ... Power has become an important cultural and ideological form, particularly within the discourse of difference and popular culture. Cultural workers [including teachers] need a new map for registering and understanding how power works to inscribe desires and identities and [hopefully to] create multiple points of ... struggle ... Also in need of ... consideration is ... a new ... pedagogy organized through ... narratives that link global and [local] contexts ... Cultural workers must investigate the new politics of commerce ... as a reaction to the emergence of 'new ethnicities, problems of racism ... nationality ... discrimination, and the assertion of particular communities.' ... If a politics of difference is to be linked not merely to registering 'otherness,' but identifying the conditions through which others become critical agents ... consumerism must be challenged ... Cultural workers [including teachers] need to take up the challenge of teaching ourselves ... and others to acknowledge our and their complicity in the discourse and practice of consumerism ... This is not to invoke a vulgar critique of the real pleasures of buying nor to underestimate the diverse ways in which people negotiate the terrain of the market ... Rather these conditions require recognition of the ... limits of consumerism, its ... active involvement in creating new identities [e.g., a "Bud-man"], and its ... assault on the notion of insurgent differences in a multicultural ... democracy. Individual and collective agency is about more than buying goods, and social life in its most principled forms points beyond the logic of the market ... It is up to ... progressive educators to address this challenge."

[2] William H. Watkins, "Multicultural Education: Toward a Historical and Political Inquiry," *Educational Theory* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 102.

[3] Raymond A. Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres, "Education and the Reproduction of Class, Gender, and Race: Responding to the Postmodernist Challenge," *Educational Theory* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 50. For a fine explanatory and theoretical work on the subject of autonomy as well as interrelationships among class, gender, and race, see Cameron McCarthy and Michael W. Apple, "Race, Class, and Gender in American Educational Research: Toward a Nonsynchronous Parallelist Position," in *Class, Race, and Gender in American Education*, ed. Lois Weis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 9–39.

[4] Christine E. Sleeter and Carl A. Grant, "A Rationale for Integrating Race, Gender, and Class," in *Class, Race, and Gender in American Education*, 156–57.

[5] Morrow and Torres, "Education and the Reproduction of Class, Gender, and Race," 60–1. For another but supporting view of the need to relate micro to macro, as well as theorizing while acting, see Richard A. Brosio,

"Reconsiderations: *Schooling in Capitalist America*," *Educational Studies* 23, no. 4 (Winter 1992): especially, 433–35.

[6] Cameron McCarthy, "Multicultural Discourses and Curriculum Reform: A Critical Perspective," *Educational Theory* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 94–5.

[7] Robert Connell, "Curriculum, Politics, and Strategies of Change," unpublished manuscript, Macquarie University.

[8] Watkins, "Multicultural Education: Toward A Historical Political Inquiry," 100.

[9] For an analysis of the conflicting imperatives of democracy and capitalism upon the school and State, see Richard A. Brosio, *A Radical Democratic Critique of Capitalist Education* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Company, 1994), chapter one, "The Janus-faced Public Schools in the United States," and chapter two, "The Role of the State in Contemporary Capitalist and Democratic Societies: Accent, the United States."

[10] Watkins, "Multicultural Education: Toward A Historical Political Inquiry," 113.

[11] Morrow and Torres, "Education and the Reproduction of Class, Gender, and Race," 54.

[12] Kris D. Gutierrez, "Afterword," in *Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference*, eds. Christine E. Sleeter and Peter L. McLaren (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 441.

[13] Watkins, "Multicultural Education: Toward A Historical Political Inquiry," 117.

[14] Holly Sklar, *Chaos Or Community? Seeking Solutions, Not Scapegoats For Bad Economics* (Boston: South End Press, 1995), 1.

[15] Ibid., 2.

[16] "Marxism Today: An Interview With István Mészáros," *Monthly Review* 44, no. 11 (April 1993): 12.

[17] Linda Rocawich, "Interview With Si Kahn," *The Progressive* 58, vol. 4 (April 1994): 30.

[18] See Richard A. Brosio, "One Marx, and the Centrality of the Historical Actor(s)," *Educational Theory* 35, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 80.

[19] Richard Brosio, "Globalism, Postmodernism, and the Need for Broad Democratic Political Educational Coalitions," *Philosophical Studies In Education*, ed. Richard Brosio (Terre Haute, IN: Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society, 1994), 30–1.

[20] Daniel Singer, "The Antepenultimate Word ...," *The Nation* 258, no. 14 (April 11, 1994): 470.

[21] Chantal Mouffe, cited in Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, *Postmodern Education* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 123.

[22] Robin D.G. Kelley, "Identity Politics And Class Struggle," *New Politics* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 85.

[23] Ibid., 87.

[24] "Themes," *New Left Review*, no. 212 (July/August 1995): 1.

[25] Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age," *New Left Review*, no. 212 (July/August 1995): 69.

[26] Brosio, *Radical Democratic Critique of Capitalist Education*, 432–34. The direct quote from Held can be found in his *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 299.

[27] Michael Roberts has reminded us that, "rather than exalt the proletarian ... Marx argued that the essence of the worker was his or her material, historical role: *servitude*. Servitude, the 'essence' of the worker in a capitalist context, must be attacked or 'overcome.' " In fact, " 'the workers' attack on their essence as workers arrives at a moment when they are able to "go beyond," to discover a terrain of creation and joy.' " Both of these quotes are to be found in Roberts', "Rereading Marx and Nietzsche," *Rethinking Marxism* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 110. I believe these passages can be understood better within the context of Marx's "species-being."

[28] Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition?", 78.

[29] Ibid., 90. Teresa Amott has explained how women are especially vulnerable to economic crises; importantly because of their double roles as principle family caregiver and within the paid labor sector. The hidden injuries of this double role are not easily quantifiable according to Amott; however, "perhaps ... because ... [subaltern] women have been so severely affected by the [current economic] crisis, forced to assume new burdens of work and responsibility but deprived of safety nets and guarantees ... [they] have been able to see ... more clearly than those whose privileges have insulated them from its worst effects. And, finally, perhaps it is the very diversity of women's experiences that has given them a vision of alternative possibilities that is richer, more pluralistic, and more democratic." *Caught In The Crisis: Women and the U.S. Economy Today* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993), 141.

[30] Clarence Lusane, "Foreword," in *Beyond Identity Politics: Emerging Social Justice Movements in Communities of Color*, ed. John Anner (Boston: South End Press, 1996), 2.

[31] Ibid., 3.

[32] Joel Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 105. See also, Harvey Kantor and Robert Lowe, "Class, Race, and the Emergence of Federal Education Policy: From the New Deal to the Great Society," *Educational Researcher* 24, no. 3 (April 1995): 4–11, 21, for an enlightening account of some reasons why liberals and those to the left of them were maneuvered into focusing on progressive school reform rather than on the construction of (at least) a social democracy. For a current analysis of "Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Educational Inequality," see the section by that name, pp. 164–68, in Susan Semel, " 'Yes, But ...': Multiculturalism and the Reduction of Educational Inequality," *Teachers College Record* 98, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 153–77.

[33] Anner, *Beyond Identity Politics*, 6.

[34] Ibid., 7.

[35] See, Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians* (Cambridge, U.K: Polity Pres, 1984), especially chapter 6 on E.P. Thompson's classic book, *The Making of the English Working Class* 1963). See also, Richard A. Brosio, "Capitalism's Global Imperium and the Continuing Need For Radical Democratic Agency," *Access: Critical Perspectives on Cultural and Policy Studies in Education* 14, no. 1 (1995): 56–73, but especially pp. 66–70. Finally, Richard Brosio, "Back to Class: A Possible Magnet Around Which to Construct a Progressive Radical Democratic Politics of Identity," unpublished paper, given at the Southeast Philosophy of Education Society on February 2, 1996 in Tallahassee, FL.

[36] Anner, *Beyond Identity Politics*, 9–10.

[37] Kelley, *Identity Politics and Class Struggle*, 91.

[38] Ibid., 92.

[39] Ibid., 96.

[40] Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 347–60. Also, Brosio, *Radical Democratic Critique of Capitalist Education*, 559, 606–14.